

## CAST CARE



### When you first get your cast

A cast protects a broken bone or other injury. Most casts are made of fibreglass, but plaster casts are used initially to allow for swelling to take place. It's called a backslab.

After a cast is on, you can't remove it yourself. Your doctor will take it off.

### What steps can you take before your surgery?

- Eat healthy foods in the weeks leading up to your surgery. This includes a wide range of foods like whole grain foods, vegetables, fruits, and protein foods, such as lean meat and beans. Your doctor will tell you how long before surgery to stop eating.
- Try to get more exercise in the weeks before your surgery. Even a little walking can help. The better shape you are in, the sooner you are likely to recover.
- Drink plenty of liquids. Your doctor may suggest that you have a sugary drink 2 to 3 hours before your surgery. This will give your body added energy. Your doctor will tell you when you should stop drinking liquids.
- Your doctor will also tell you if you should stop taking any medicines.
- Stop or cut down on your use of alcohol.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can delay recovery. Stop smoking for at least a month before surgery. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Bring chewing gum. Chewing some gum soon after surgery can help stimulate your digestion.

### Putting weight on your cast

Follow your doctor's instructions for when you can first put weight on the cast. Fibreglass casts dry quickly and are soon ready to bear weight.

When it's okay to put weight on your cast, do not stand or walk on it unless it is designed for walking.

### Swelling

Your cast may feel snug for a few days after your surgery or injury. This is usually because of swelling. Swelling can slow healing and cause pain. Too much swelling inside the cast can cause pressure that can harm you.

To help reduce swelling:



- Prop up the injured arm or leg on a pillow as much as you can when you sit or lie down. Try to keep it above the level of your heart.
- If the fingers or toes on the limb with the cast were not injured, wiggle them every now and then. This helps move the blood and fluids in the injured limb.
- Take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). These can help reduce swelling and pain. Be safe with medicines. Be sure to follow all instructions on the label.

### **Water and your cast**

- Keep your cast dry.
- Tape a sheet of plastic to cover your cast when you take a shower or bath or when you have any other contact with water. Moisture can collect under the cast and cause skin irritation and itching. It can make infection more likely if you have had surgery or have a wound under the cast.

### **Cast and skin care**

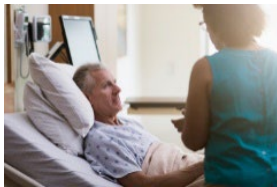
- Try blowing cool air from a hair dryer or fan into the cast to help relieve itching. Never stick items under your cast to scratch the skin.
- Don't use oils or lotions near your cast. If the skin gets red or irritated around the edge of the cast, you may pad the edges with a soft material or use tape to cover the edges. Call your doctor if you think you have a skin infection.
- Keep up your muscle strength and tone as much as you can while protecting your injured limb or joint. Your doctor may want you to tense and relax the muscles protected by the cast. Check with your doctor or physiotherapist for instructions.

### **When to call**

Call your doctor right away if:

- You have increased or severe pain.

- You feel a warm or painful spot under the cast.
- You have problems with your cast. For example:
  - The skin under the cast burns or stings.
  - The cast feels too tight.
  - There is a lot of swelling near the cast. (Some swelling is normal.)
  - You have a new fever.
  - There is drainage or a bad smell coming from the cast.
- Your foot or hand is cool or pale or changes colour.
- You have trouble moving your fingers or toes.
- You have symptoms of a blood clot in your arm or leg. (This is called a deep vein thrombosis.) Symptoms may include:
  - Pain in the arm, calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
  - Redness and swelling in the arm, leg, or groin.



### **How you may feel after your operation**

- You may feel nauseated, light headed dizzy or sleepy for up to 24 hours after your surgery
- You may have a slight temperature for 2 days
- You may feel tired for a few days after your surgery

**For 24 hours after your surgery do not....**

- Drive a vehicle
- Operate heavy equipment
- Drink alcohol or smoke
- Make any important decisions